United Nations E/AC.51/2001/L.6/Add.41

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
21 June 2001

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-first session
11 June-6 July 2001
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-first session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Ayman M. **Elgammal** (Egypt)

Addendum

Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit
(Item 6)

The use of consultants in the United Nations

1. At its 9th meeting, on 15 June 2001, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "The use of consultants in the United Nations" (A/55/59) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/55/59/Add.1). The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was introduced by Inspector Armando Duque González.

Discussion

2. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was overwhelmingly appreciated. Its contents provided a rigorous analysis of an important subject which had attracted the attention of Member States over many years and contained constructive and action-oriented recommendations. The view was expressed that it was a good example of how JIU reports should be modelled.

3. Concern was expressed over what was perceived as the dissuasive underlying tone of some of the comments of the Secretary-General.

4. The possibility of the excessive and duplicative use of consultants remained a major concern of Member States, as was the unbalanced geographical distribution in the selection of consultants. Support was expressed for the recommendations aimed at ensuring that pertinent information was made available to programme managers

01-42166 (E) 220601

so as to avoid the use of consultants when expertise was available within the Secretariat and to avoid duplicative activities. It was noted that the Office of Human Resources Management was making progress in the development of the skills inventory project and the hope was expressed that it would be completed as soon as possible. Concern was expressed, however, over the confusing and even contradictory terms of paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the Secretary-General's comments related to the need for an electronic information system covering the substantive programmes of the United Nations, as a means to avoid duplicative activities.

5. Considerable importance was attached to the need to improve the geographical distribution and the establishment of appropriate norms to that end, as well as to the full and transparent reporting to pertinent legislative and oversight bodies. It was also stressed that the Committee should ensure that there was adequate follow-up.

6. The view was also expressed that an enforced or rigid system for the geographical distribution of consultancies should not be established.

7. Emphasis should also be given by the Secretariat to ensuring an improved gender distribution in the use of consultants.

8. The view was expressed that the policy of personnel reduction encouraged the excessive use of consultants from the countries hosting United Nations headquarters or offices. Concern was expressed with regard to the inability of the current monitoring systems to detect the continuous use of a limited number of consultants, in contradiction to the current rules.

9. It was suggested that in order to improve the use of resources and to avoid duplication of efforts, the use of comprehensive reports should be encouraged.

10. Concern was expressed that annex 1 to the report was not consistent with the provisions of paragraph 4 of section IX of General Assembly resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, in which the Assembly had requested that in the submission of reports containing lists of staff, the established practice of showing the representation of staff according to major geographical groupings should be discontinued and that countries should be listed in alphabetical order, and in that regard views were expressed that the Secretary-General should ensure that future reports of the Joint Inspection Unit were consistent with that resolution.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee welcomed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of consultants in the United Nations and expressed its appreciation to the Unit for its analysis of the issue and its concrete recommendations.

12. The Committee expressed disappointment over the lack of progress in establishing mechanisms to ensure avoidance of duplication of activities and in developing norms aimed at attracting consultants on a wide geographical basis.

13. The Committee noted the lack of information on the gender perspective in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit.

14. The Committee considered recommendation 5 and requested the Secretary-General to study different methodologies which might be used to correct the geographical imbalance in hiring consultants and to report to it on

workable options to enable Member States to make an informed choice among alternative systems at its forty-second session.

15. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Joint Inspection Unit and to request the Joint Inspection Unit to review the progress made in the implementation of the approved recommendations contained in its report.